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THE RECORD REIGN.

BY THE RIGHT HON. THE MARQUIS OF LORNE, K. T.

MANY Americans feel as much admiration and veneration for Queen Victoria as do her own subjects. The feeling has nothing in common with any preference for monarchical or for republican institutions. It is non-political with large masses of men and women who simply look on the Queen as a woman who throughout a long life, lived conspicuously in the full sight of the world, has borne her burden of office with dignity and wisdom, and has fulfilled, in the way we all deem the best, the ideal of the life of maiden, wife, mother and widow. "Not once or twice in our rough island story, the path of duty was the way to glory," as Tennyson sang; but duty may be followed in various ways, and glory may be sought in more. It has been the proudest prerogative of Queen Victoria to make the woman's duty the nation's glory. The sovereignty the governing people give to their Queen has in no other of the long centuries of our history been so blended with the majesty no suffrages can bestow and no law establish. Elizabeth derived from her Tudor ancestry the love of splendor and conquest which, with her untamed temper, betrayed the wildness of her Cambrian blood. Anne, the last of the Stuarts, who also saw great deeds done by England in war and in letters, was too much influenced by designing favorites to hold the place which can be occupied only by one having a powerful and trained judgment as well as a pure domestic character. To be in the world and yet not of it; to feel with the sorrow and hopes of those around us, and yet to be able to measure the ends that grief and joy may reach; to be thoroughly human and humane, and yet to be carried away by no violent enthusiasm; to be strong enough to bear the isolation of great rank, and still be simple and kindly and perfectly true; to see the

good even in the most mistaken, and to be able to point out faults without passion and with the insight that is not sympathy, and is not over-censure—are the qualities which were lacking in the rules of Elizabeth and Anne. The one was an autocratic termagant, the other an emotional matron. Their times were alike only in this, that none rightly knew who would succeed to the throne when they should die. But Elizabeth had a clear field for the exercise of her authority. Anne had too big a nursery and too powerful subjects to lead in politics herself. The last of the Tudors could make her little England of only three million souls do much as she chose; and her choice was action that recked little of what is now called “European Concert.” The last of the Stuarts was necessarily but a piece to be played in a game where allies had greater forces in the field than those sent by England. The statesmen of Elizabeth were courtiers of the Queen; the men who ruled Britain under Anne were stronger than the sovereign. There has been no previous example of the modern conjunction of party rule with the modifying influence exercised by a woman, at once the sovereign and the most experienced counsellor in the realm. As gold exists where unseen, so influence may be found where no outward form reveals it. The headstrong conceit or passion of a party leader is less apt to be turned from a sudden and violent purpose by the disapproval of a King than by the gentle wording of the writing of a Queen. Counsel is more listened to by men when it comes from a woman’s lips or pen (provided always that the woman have good sense), than from any man, however great his tact may be. Strength may be found in the very weakness of the position of a Constitutional Sovereign, in that the view expressed by the Reigning Personage can be neglected or followed as the Governing Personage, in the shape of the Minister in power, may choose.

The minister must generally feel that such views are those of one whose own position cannot be affected by the wishes expressed, and are therefore based on an impartial consideration of what is best for the country at large. In matters connected with foreign policy, this is especially the case. Fortunately, the patriotism of the British Parliament has usually left foreign complications to be dealt with by the ministry without hindering it by an opposition that might diminish the influence of the government in conducting negotiations abroad. But this is not

always, and cannot always be, the case, and the Sovereign may in such conjunctions be a most useful intermediary between the Government and the Opposition, bringing the leaders of both to a common opinion with regard to the course to be pursued to avoid a common danger, or enforce a common national policy. It is customary to say that as soon as the constitutional head of a State becomes, or is suspected of being, a partisan, or even of leaning to one party, his usefulness is gone. But this is an exaggeration. No sane person can live among conflicting opinions without having his own views. To be a mere register of the fleeting opinion of the majority would expose the Sovereign or Governor who so effaced himself to the contempt of his own ministers. But his action must not be in public opposed to the majority in the Chamber. If it be, and if a crisis arise in which it is necessary that he disagree with ministers openly, they must resign and another ministry must take the responsibility of the refusal to adopt the policy of the men they supplant. The constitutional head of the state is borne harmless through the crisis, not because he has no opinion of his own, but because that opinion is covered and endorsed by another ministry responsible to the country for it. Where the advice of a government is not accepted, the resignation of that government must necessarily follow, and if the responsibility assumed by its successor be not approved by the people at the election held to confirm the power of the newcomers, the Head of the State may see himself under the disagreeable necessity of recalling the former ministry whose advice he had refused to take.

When a government is defeated at the polls the power of Constitutional Sovereign is for a period considerable, for he can refuse to accept the advice of those who have been defeated in the elections, and yet may not accept their resignations until the meeting of Parliament, thus keeping them dangling between a political heaven of irresponsibility and the earthly obligation of carrying on the administration of affairs *ad interim*. But here again the "next man in," as soon as Parliament has met and the previous ministry is out, has to declare that the responsibility of all that has been done is assumed by himself and his colleagues. "The king can do no wrong," because there is always a minister there to be the "whipping boy" or rather the boy who is whipped, and who is the bearer of all responsibility. This gives

the position of Constitutional Sovereign an isolation and a permanence which cannot attach to any ruler who takes an active part in politics, and who is associated in all men's minds with views which fail or become unpopular. But the weaker, or the less tangible, the public part taken in affairs by the reigning sovereign, the more easy does it become for him, not only to place his views on all important occasions before ministers, but to see that they are listened to and weighed by his councillors.

The power to do this must greatly depend upon personal qualifications, that is, on the influence the individual monarch may exercise. It is recorded of the Sovereign of a little German State that he had become so used merely to echo the words of his councillors that when he received an address from the mayor of a town and heard that the mayor and the burghers were glad to see him, the gracious ruler could only answer: "I too am glad that you see me!" Usually, however, even in such an extreme case of inanity as this, and where the personage is probably "unaccustomed to public speaking," he has friends who can put some sensible words into his mouth, for no European King has to undergo the ordeal of platform oratory favored by candidates for the Presidency "on the stump" in the United States.

They say that the speed of a squadron of warships at sea must be regulated by the slowest vessel. It is a maxim that the strength of a chain is no greater than that of its weakest link; but the object of mankind in constituting a government must be to prevent any weakness from dominating any situation. Personal influence may be powerful for good, but it must not be potent for harm. In America, the frequent checks provided by the statesmen of the Revolution makes all action executive only after some time has passed after the vote for such action has been given. Yet the President may do more harm than can a British King. In Britain there are too few checks on the Chambers, and more than sufficient to weight the monarch. The long practice of self-government on the part of the people is supposed to be a sufficient check of itself. Whether this be a correct theory, when almost every one is allowed to vote, time only can show. But there is little doubt that the checks provided against the Sovereign's arbitrary power are complete, and even if he have less experience and wisdom than the rashest of the deputies in the House of Commons, he can do but little harm. On the other

hand, if he be wise and tactful and persuasive, and if he have the power to make men believe in his disinterestedness, impartiality, and honesty, he may have a great part in public affairs.

Personal influence ! Yes, how that survives, and defies all attempts to render it ineffective ! Men who disbelieve in it and set up socialist or communist ideas, denying to any individual any priority or advantage over his fellows, see with astonishment and mortification that the hated thing enters into their most secret circles and sways all their action. It was supposed that it was only in the unenlightened ages of the world that any one man could have any personal command in great affairs. With contempt it was pronounced that the heroes of antiquity or the great captains of bygone centuries must have had an inferior crew to deal with when so paramount a position was given to any individual. Englishmen in more recent times thought that it was only Frenchmen who could let "Bony" ride so rough-shod over them, when "liberty, equality, and fraternity" had but just been inscribed over the doors of every public building in France. Who but unenlightened Russians would allow a Tsar to have absolute dominion ? Nowadays, surely, it was argued, when intelligence, culture, and education are so generally diffused, none could arrogate to himself any large share of the admiration and worship of his fellow countrymen. Is this so ? Do we not rather see that men, even if raised to a high level of knowledge of material things, are yet as emotional as ever, as apt to follow like sheep the lead of one, as incapable of weighing and judging the faults of those who by appeals to their pride, their passion, and prejudice may rise to the head of affairs ? Except in the very rare cases where great wars or convulsions of the political world are in progress, it is most difficult to get electors to value the "high politics" at stake at their proper measure of importance. Rather will they discuss the character of a candidate, and his private affairs, his position in society, the influence he may be able to use for their individual benefit ; nay, even his appearance seems often to them of more account than his principles. The personal factor seems to be almost as great as ever !

The old hero worship is not dead, though all men may be able to reckon equally and have the same right to use the ballot box. We may flatter ourselves that in civil affairs, at least, the person so distinguished by popular favor may have justified his

elevation by the greater probity of his character as compared with the popular idols of former times. It is to be hoped that such flattery has some foundation. Where it is most likely to have the surest grounds for justification is in cases where long life in high position has tested the belief in excellence. In what Tennyson calls "the fierce light that beats upon a throne," there is a test, when that throne is occupied by one ruling over a free people. In private council, a great personality has enormous influence with a free people; their press enables them to measure with greater accuracy as time passes the effect of their monarch's conduct on morals, on politics, on fashions. The imitative quality in human nature must always make the personal conduct and character of anyone called to a throne a matter of importance. If evil is shown in high places it will be multiplied in the lower. The stamp of fashion will be set in the habits which would not be imitated were they not known to be those of the rich and the fortunate. And this is not only true in regard to wearers of the crown, but it is to be seen as following for good or for bane the lives of all who have made their mark, and whose actions have thus become a subject of interest to the many.

Trust is of gradual growth. It is only in cases of "love at first sight" that we are desirous in private life of putting all "on the hazard of a die," only because, as an Irishman would say, there is no hazard, or we do not believe that any risk exists. But, as a rule, even in the family life, trust comes last of the attributes of affection. Still more in public business, a man must be very lucky if he be deemed "safe." It is of the essence of all trust that it ripens the belief in truthfulness as well as in capacity. Openness, loyalty, and honesty are the levers to raise the respect to admiration and trust.

The ministers of Queen Victoria found in the maiden monarch a loyalty to the truth which is rare, even among the best of maidens. The girl who at seventeen years of age was hastily summoned one morning at Kensington Palace to hear that her uncle had died and that his counsellors were coming in a few hours to greet her as Queen was by good fortune and good training, and native health of character, able, like the warrior youths of old, "to ride and speak the truth." And it is mainly because of this quality, confirmed and strengthened by the character of the Prince whom she was so soon to accept as Consort, that trust

in her has for sixty years been part and parcel of the British mind.

The young Coburg prince was a cousin of the Queen, and was a man of very remarkable weight of character. The instruction given to him as a boy to bear himself *fürstlich*—that is, in a princely way—in life had not been given in vain. Full of an almost romantic desire to give dignity by conduct to a position which was eminent in his own land, but not important, he united high aims with a singular absence of enthusiasm in manner. Shyness was probably the cause of this concealment of enthusiasm. No one could be heartier, gayer, and happier than he was in family life, but in society he seemed cold, and he was not at first appreciated in London. There is always among Britishers a strong prejudice against foreigners, which must be chiefly due to the insular position of the country, for most Englishmen's fathers have come to England as strangers at times remote or near. But each newcomer in any island, even one as large as Great Britain, is always looked upon as a peculiar and inferior specimen. This may be noticed wherever salt water surrounds a bit of land, and is a human peculiarity which must be left to physiologists to explain. All who learned to know him well at Court soon perceived how excellent he was, but his diffidence made him stiff with those he did not care for, and this appearance of haughtiness was against him in the London world. Singularly self-sacrificing in desiring that the Queen should have all the regard and loyalty and honor given by her people, he kept himself conscientiously in the background, and yet toiled like a slave at the work necessary to qualify himself as her councillor and partner in all the anxieties and responsibilities of her station. He was full of this anxiety to live in accordance with the high ideal he had formed of what the husband of a British sovereign should be, and he succeeded in the task. Before he died, at the early age of forty-three, he had so organized the Court that the burden of its routine was much lightened for the Queen. He had brought system into her life, so that each part of the day had its allotted occupation, whether of work, social entertainment, or private amusement. He was no lover of sour retirement or pedantic tedium. Riding, driving, skating, dancing, were as much a part of the life he guided and shared as was the elaborate noting and summing up of debates on all public affairs. Memorandums for

the Queen to send to her ministers, full of wise, moderate counsel in time of difficulty ; letters to leaders of parties giving well-informed views on foreign politics derived from a large personal acquaintance and correspondence with sovereigns and leading men in Europe—all these were never lacking : while attention was bestowed on the sometimes almost as harassing details of social work. And in the delicate labor of giving an example in Court life, which is so rare an accomplishment in sovereigns full of youth and high spirits, and yet so necessary in countries where the ears of the press can hear all the whispers of scandal, he made virtue to be at once loved and feared, and honor a name to be worn by the brave and the noble, but denied to the bully and the gamester. The Queen herself would be the first to say that the success of her sixty years' reign is chiefly due to the young man who at the age of twenty-two taught her so to divide time as to reign over an empire.

The habits he persuaded her to adopt have become the custom of her every-day life. There are still hours devoted each day to given duties and occupations, and there are still the same months of each year given to residence in the places where the happy joint life was passed in the days that laid the foundation of the success won by order and industry and tact. Work is never neglected, and touch is always kept with ministers, one of whom is on duty when the Queen is at her country place in Scotland. The Prime Minister or the leader of the House of Commons, being the chief of the party in power, sends each night a brief account of the debate of the night, and this is forwarded, as are all despatches, in leather boxes to the Sovereign. Each morning the contents are read and the despatches returned with any notes and observations which may be expedient. This routine of business, with all events noted, and documents copied and filed, gives a reserve of precedent and a fund for judgment which statesman after statesman has found to be invaluable. The thoughts which the Queen may express upon any subject have been quoted by them with respect and admiration for the knowledge shown, and the value of the light thrown upon difficult problems. The well-known instance of the modification of the form of a despatch written at Lord John Russell's instance in regard to the seizure of Mason and Slidell by a United States war vessel in 1861 furnishes an example of the influence for peace

that has been successfully exerted by the Queen's supervision of affairs. This was the last occasion on which the Prince personally was able to assist his wife. Since then his system has been diligently followed.

The Crown has been compared to the figure-head of a ship. It is sometimes said that it is only preserved to give a fictitious dignity to the vessel of state. They who speak thus know little, and probably care less, how monarchy works. If figure-heads can walk the deck and have conference with the captain, arrange for the command in case he falls overboard, and even have influence for the keeping of discipline in the fore-castle, the comparison may be good. In public affairs we deem chairmen necessary at meetings, and we do not condemn them as useless if they cannot eject all whom they cannot persuade. In private life we consider it fortunate if the family have the advantage of the guidance of a good mother. And this Her Majesty has been to her people. She has exercised a continuous influence for good for sixty years. Of how many others in any position can the same be said? No wonder that all Anglo-Saxons and Celts are proud of her, for the blood of both is in her veins, and the wish expressed in "*Ciad Mille Fáilte*" is that of the time-honored "God save the Queen."

LORNE.